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SUBJECT: BUSINESS ROUNDUP AFTER SEPTEMBER 28 EVENTS

11. (SBU) Summary. Commerce in Conakry, Faranah, Labe, Mamou, and several other of Guinea's larger cities, has come to an almost complete halt this week. Gas stations throughout the country have been closed since Monday morning, and the major roads between Guinea's farmlands and its capital city remain virtually unused. City residents, a majority of whom are very poor and have no electricity, are beginning to suffer from the effects of business closure. Citing the security situation and several instances of looting, small businesses and gas stations plan to remain closed and taxis not to run until the situation improves. END SUMMARY.

BUSINESS CLOSURE

12. (U) Several small Conakry businesses shut down on Monday morning in anticipation of protests throughout the day. In the past, businesses have often become the target of looting by protestors and military personnel during times of unrest. As soon as the protests started around 9am on Monday morning, the gas stations as well as the majority of the food vendors around Conakry closed for the day. Most of them have yet to open, as the security situation continues to be unstable.

13. (SBU) On Tuesday, many businesses in Labe, Mamou, and Faranah closed in anticipation of protests in those cities. Although the anti-CNDD protests in those areas were peaceful, many of the businesses remain closed today. According to youth, businesses may decide to soon institute a campaign of "ville morts," where they would essentially shut down all commerce in the city as a form of protest against the CNDD.

14. (U) The routes between Guinea's agricultural towns in Middle Guinea and Conakry have been virtually unused since Monday morning. As such, very few agricultural staples are getting to Conakry and those that are on the market, are becoming extremely expensive. There are also very few taxis between the two regions, and operating within Conakry itself. As taxis are often the only way for Guineans to get around, many of Conakry's residents are forced to stay within their neighborhoods.

15. (U) Much of the city's residents are paid on a daily basis, and have not been able to go to work or receive their pay since Friday, September 25. Embassy Conakry has received reports that much of Conakry's population has resorted to eating rice and palm oil for their meals, as they have no substantive food in their house, and few ways of obtaining more. Embassy received reports that several local market vendors are refusing to sell food as a way to mobilize the

population, saying that if people are hungry, they will fight harder to get Dadis out of office.

MINING AT A STANDSTILL

¶6. (U) Mining operations are mostly continuing, though the excess stock of many of the mines is being kept at the facilities until the security situation improves. The major international investments have issued security orders for staff to remain in their residences. However, many of the actual mining areas upcountry remain calm, according to the companies. BHP Billiton noted that their mining operations in the Forest Region remain normal, as does commerce in the main cities of that region.

¶7. (U) Government contacts and shipping companies report that the port authority is operating with a skeleton crew, as many of their employees have stayed home since Monday morning. Though ships continue to come in, several shipments have been diverted to neighboring countries until Conakry becomes more secure for shipments. With very few workers at the port authority, official processes are reportedly being ignored.

LOOTING

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¶8. (U) Despite being closed, several businesses have suffered from extensive looting. According to several sources, armed Forestiere militias systematically vandalized and looted several small businesses last night in Cosa, a poor neighborhood of Conakry. After assessing the damage to their stores, many store owners decided to move their excess stock to their residences, pending better security in the neighborhood. The reports about Cosa have made many city vendors tentative about reopening their stores in the near future.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Dadis declared Wednesday and Thursday as national days of mourning, and Friday is the national independence day. Many businesses are unlikely to open before next Monday, even if the security situation does improve. Some business people believe that Dadis may have declared a week of holidays simply cover up the fact that businesses would be closed due to the security situation. It is worrying that the notoriously poor population of Conakry may face a food shortage over the next few days, possibly agitating the already tense situation.
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